

# Newsletter

U.S. 95  
Council Alternate Route



Idaho Transportation Department

May, 2006

This newsletter provides an overview of the proposed U.S. 95 Council Alternate Route project and the Environmental Assessment (EA). Its purpose is to serve as a guide to what can be found in the EA and how to comment on the proposed project. Refer to the EA document for complete descriptions and full documentation.

## Public Hearing Announcement

The Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) will conduct a public hearing to record testimony regarding the Environmental Assessment, and the design concept Alternative B, the "preferred" alternative for the U.S. 95 Council Alternate Route. The hearing will be held **Thursday, June 22 in the Council Elementary School, Multi-purpose Room from 4 - 7 p.m.** Project team members will be available to answer questions. You are encouraged to provide written comments at the hearing or a hearing officer will be available to record your oral testimony.

### PUBLIC HEARING

**Thursday, June 22**

**Anytime between 4 - 7 p.m.**

**Council Elementary School**

**Multi-purpose Room**

**202 Highway 95**

**Council, Idaho**

## Project Background



U.S. 95 in Council.

U.S. 95 is an important highway for the local community and for motorists traveling between northern and southern Idaho. The highway makes two 90 degree turns within Council's city limits. Parked cars create problems for trucks and recreational vehicles trying to make the turns. The trucks create hazards for other vehicles and pedestrians.

In 1998 the Council Chamber of Commerce submitted a "citizens' report" to the City Council recommending that an alternate route be considered. The report identified eight possible alternatives to the current U.S. 95 alignment. In 2000 the City Council recommended two alternatives to ITD. In 2003, ITD began an environmental evaluation and began investigating the preliminary development of an alternate route for U.S. 95 through Council. The eight alternatives named in the citizen report, plus a No Action Alternative, were analyzed. The results of the initial analysis were presented to state and federal regulatory agencies in the fall of 2003. Both Alternative A and B appeared reasonable and met the purpose and need of the project. A No Action Alternative is always considered. Further analysis determined that Alternative B has fewer environmental impacts than Alternative A. Alternative B was then selected by state and federal agency representatives to be carried forward in the process for detailed study. A comparison of the two alternatives' impacts and a preliminary concept design of Alternative B were presented to the public for comment in 2005.

## What is the Environmental Assessment document?

An EA is a full disclosure document that provides a detailed description of the proposed project, the existing environment and an analysis of the anticipated benefits and effects of all reasonable alternatives. The EA reports impacts to cultural and historic sites, threatened and endangered species, recreation and land use, water and air quality, noise, wetlands, traffic, access, and safety. The EA satisfies the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations to document and analyze impacts of the project on the quality of the natural and human environment. The EA addresses impacts of the Proposed Action (Alternative B) and the No Action Alternative, and any additional impacts that could occur as a result of other past, on-going or planned projects in the area. An approved EA gives ITD the authority to proceed with the final design and construction of the Proposed Action.

For additional information visit:

[www.itd.idaho.gov](http://www.itd.idaho.gov)

click on *Get Involved*;

*Southwest Idaho*;

*U.S. 95 Council Alternate Route*



# Alternatives Carried Forward



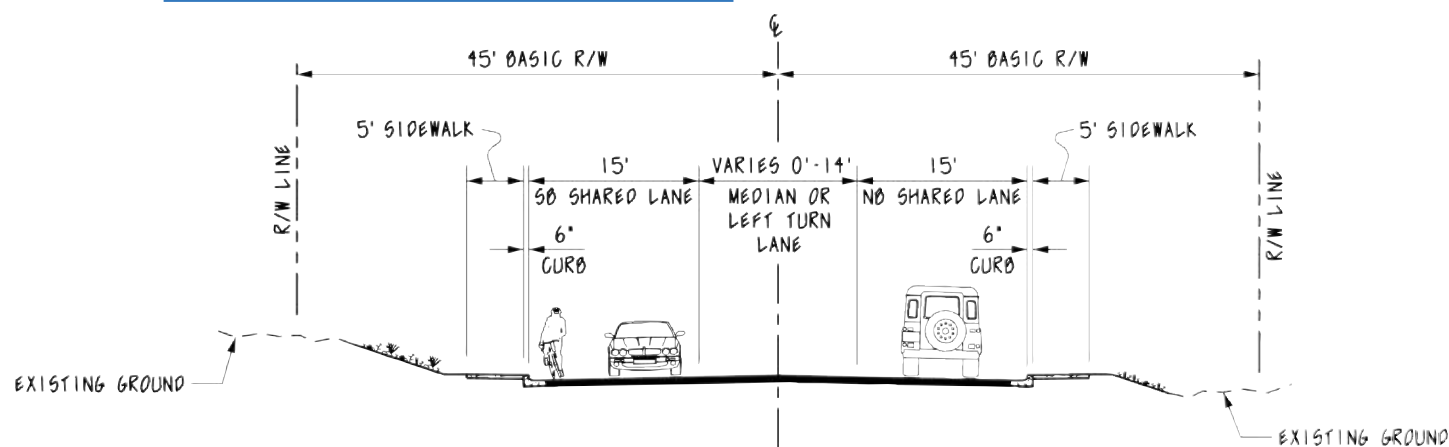
Alignments shown on map are approximate.

**Alternative B** – This route leaves the existing U.S. 95 on the north side of the golf course and travels northeast through the Idaho Transportation Department's maintenance yard then reconnects to U.S. 95 at the corner of Illinois and U.S. 95. The project includes construction of approximately one mile of new highway. This alternative also includes intersection construction or improvements at the following roads: existing U.S. 95 at the south end of Alternative B; Exeter Street; School Avenue and Illinois Avenue; Lucille Avenue, and Whiteley Avenue. California Avenue would be closed to through traffic. Intersections and driveways, also known as approaches, will be regulated in accordance with ITD's Type IV Access Control Policies.

Type IV Access Control helps ensure a high level of service and safety are maintained along this route as traffic increases. Type IV Access Control allows for intersections every 1 mile in suburban areas and every ½ mile in urban areas. New driveways, or approaches would not be permitted in either suburban or urban areas.

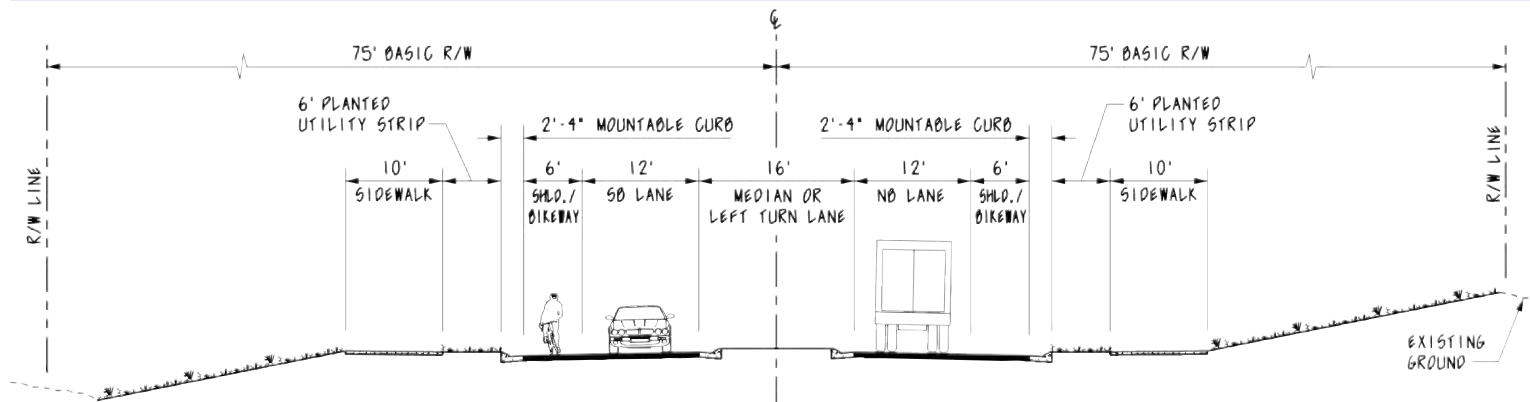
**No Action** - A new route would not be built. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires the No Action Alternative be evaluated. The No Action Alternative retains the existing U.S. 95 roadway through the study area. Other than routine maintenance, no construction or realignment of existing roadway alignments would occur. With this alternative, the 90 degree curves would remain. The existing roadway would not be improved to meet current standards or satisfy the project's purpose and need.

## What would the roadway look like?



**Roadway Profile North of Galena & Exeter Streets**

Note: The roadway pavement will be widened near intersections to accommodate right turns.



**Roadway Profile South of Galena & Exeter Streets**

Note: The roadway pavement will be widened near intersections to accommodate right turns.

# Environmental Process



## What is the environmental process? Why is it required?

The National Environmental Policy Act was passed in 1969. The act, considered the “national charter” for protection of the environment, has three major goals:

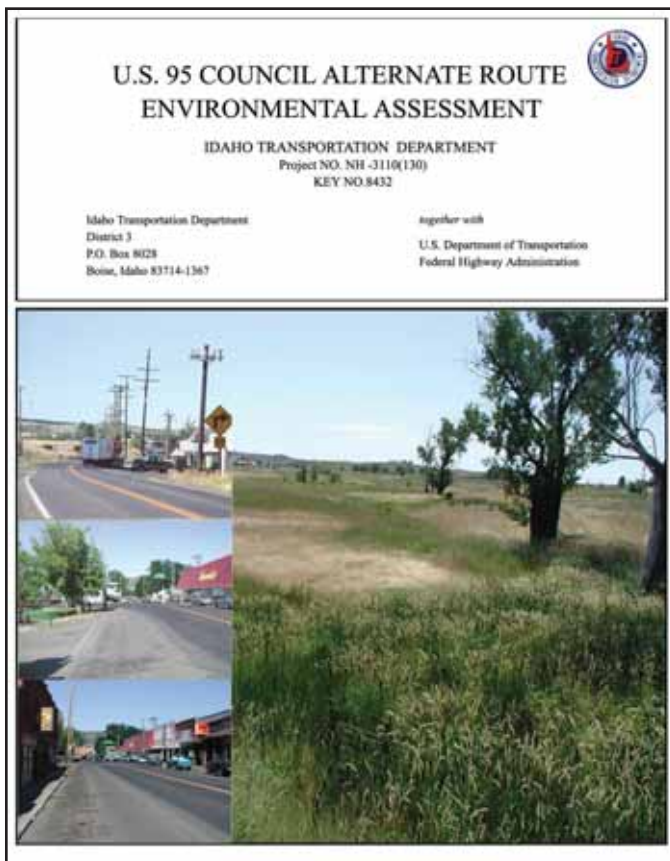
- Set national environmental policy
- Establish a basis for the environmental analysis
- Operate the Council on Environmental Quality

## National Environmental Policy Act requires:

- That federally funded projects be examined for potential impacts to social and environmental resources;
- That impacts to the human and natural resources be balanced with the public’s need for a safe and efficient transportation system; and
- That a full-disclosure environmental document be prepared for any project likely to have environmental impacts.

The project team for the U.S. 95 Council Alternate Route conducted an environmental evaluation by performing topographical mapping, traffic counts, geotechnical investigations, and environmental fieldwork. This information, plus public input, helped determine roadway layout and design criteria. The information was also used to recommend strategies for minimizing environmental impacts.

# Environmental Assessment Contents



- Chapter 1 Purpose & Need - *What problems are we trying to solve?*
- Chapter 2 Description of the Alternatives including the Proposed Action - *What alternatives solve the problem?*
- Chapter 3 Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Mitigation - *How would the alternatives impact the human and natural environment?*
- Chapter 4 Comments and Coordination - *How were the public, regulatory and resource agencies involved?*
- Distribution List
- List of Contributors and Preparers
- References
- Appendix A - Idaho Transportation Department Forms
- Appendix B - Conceptual Wetland Mitigation Plan
- Appendix C - Public Involvement
- Appendix D - Agency and Tribal Correspondence

## Additional Technical Reports:

- Noise Technical Report
- Hazardous Materials Technical Report
- Wetlands Delineation Technical Report



# Chapter 1

## What problems are we trying to solve?

**Chapter 1 Purpose and Need** identifies why this Environmental Assessment is being conducted; provides a background and history for the project; and identifies the problem that needs to be addressed.

### Project Purpose

The purpose of this project is to improve pedestrian and traffic safety, reduce congestion, and reduce U.S. 95 through-traffic within the downtown and southerly areas in Council, Idaho.

### Project Need

The need for this project is based on the following factors:

- Safety hazards, congestion, and disruption of the free-flow movement of other motorists occurs due to the turning path for trucks and other long or oversized vehicles encroaching upon the opposing traffic lanes at the two 90 degree turns within the downtown area. Trucks get stuck as a result of the sharp turns.
- There is insufficient clearance for minimum clearance tractor-trailers (e.g., "low boys") and insufficient traction for trucks and cars caused by the crown and slope of the existing roadway section in the downtown area (between the two 90 degree turns). "Low boy" tractor-trailers often scrape the existing pavement, and trucks regularly get stuck during adverse winter roadway conditions.
- U.S. 95 traffic is incompatible with downtown parking and pedestrian use of the existing roadway. Parked cars infringe on the turning movements of trucks and the free-flow movement of motorists, creating a hazard for vehicles and pedestrians.
- Pedestrians and traffic conflicts and congestion occur near the adjacent school facilities.

# Chapter 2

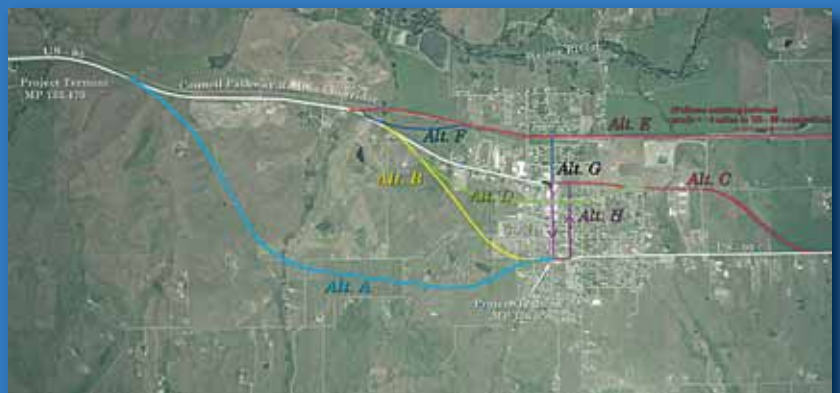
## What alternatives solve the problem?

**Chapter 2 Description of the Alternatives including the Proposed Action** describes the history of the eight alternatives that were identified during the scoping of the project; provides descriptions and comparisons of alternatives that were considered and eliminated; and provides a description of the two alternatives carried forward for detailed study.

### Initial Range of Alternatives Considered

In 1998, the Council Chamber of Commerce formed a citizens' work group to explore ways of improving U.S. 95 in the downtown Council area. The work group developed eight alternative routes for U.S. 95 that addressed safety and congestion issues.

- Alternative A - The Golf Course Loop
- Alternative B - The Station to Station Loop
- Alternative C - Through Way
- Alternative D - Court House/Galena
- Alternative E - Railroad Right-of-Way Route
- Alternative F - Depot Route
- Alternative G - Park Route
- Alternative H - One Way



The eight alternatives developed by the citizens' group and a "No Action" Alternative were screened for adherence to the project purpose and need and any critical environmental issues. Two alternatives, A and B, were found to meet the project purpose and need and did not have any critical environmental issues. However, Alternative A - Golf Course Loop, appeared to have greater environmental impacts compared to B - Station to Station Loop, and it was recommended by several agency representatives that Alternative A be eliminated.

After considering the purpose and need, environmental impacts and public input, Alternative B and the "No Action" Alternative were carried forward for full analysis in the Environmental Assessment.

# Chapter 3

## How would Alternative B impact the human and natural environment?

Resource	Summary of Impacts for the Proposed Action	Environmental Commitments
Cultural Resources	No Adverse Effect on historic properties. Construction activities could unexpectedly discover buried archeological sites.	None Required.
Wetlands	Would result in the loss of 3.78 acres of wetlands.	The Grossen Creek stream corridor below Galena Street has been selected as the mitigation site.
Vegetation	Would convert about 5.7 vegetated acres to pavement. Areas disturbed by construction would be revegetated.	Disturbed areas will be re-seeded with weed-free native vegetation.
Wildlife	No effect anticipated on threatened and endangered species.	Off-site areas once identified will be reviewed for threatened and endangered species.
Water	The increase of 5.7 acres of pavement would increase the volume and velocity of runoff.	Implementation of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan and Best Management Practices.
Socioeconomics	Increasing roadway safety and operation will have a positive effect because it will route traffic away from the downtown area. Will relocate one business and one residence. Will require right-of-way acquisition from 18 property owners.	Acquisition and relocation activities will be conducted in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970.
Recreation	No recreational facilities exist along the alignment. Decreased visibility of school and park facility.	Signs for the city park will be posted along U.S. 95.
Air Quality	Will cause short-term, construction-related fugitive dust, particulate emissions and exhaust pollutants.	Contractors will be required to use methods to control, prevent and minimize atmospheric emissions and contaminants.
Noise	None of the noise sensitive receptors would approach or exceed ITD's noise abatement criteria. Construction equipment noise would range to about 95 DBA when measured from 50 feet.	Construction activities will be limited to the hours between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.
Hazardous Materials	No adverse impacts.	Any contaminated soil or groundwater encountered during construction will be disposed of in accordance with state and federal regulations. Actions will be taken to prevent construction related contamination.
Visual Impacts	No significant negative visual impacts.	None Required.
Traffic, Access and Safety	Would considerably improve the level of service and the safety of the roadway.	Project specific traffic control plans will be developed for construction.

# Chapter 4

## How were the public, regulatory and resource agencies involved?

### Public

- **1998** - Council Chamber of Commerce submitted a "Citizens Report" to the City Council recommending an alternative route be considered.
- **January 20, 2004** - Project newsletter sent to all addresses in Adams County
- **December 2004** - Letters sent to property owners
- **December 2004 - January 2005** - Personal or phone contact with property owners
- **January 13, 2005** - Open House Public Meeting, Council Elementary School

### Agencies

- **August 19, 2003** - Agency coordination meeting  
Agreed upon Purpose and Need Statement
  - Idaho Transportation Department (ITD)
  - U. S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACOE)
  - Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG)
  - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
  - Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- **May 22, 2006** - Environmental Assessment sent to the following agencies for review and comment:
 

Idaho State Historical Society, Idaho Fish and Game Department, Idaho Department of Water Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Federal Highway Administration, City of Council, Adams County, and Idaho State Library

# How can I learn more about the project and comment on the Environmental Assessment?

**Review the Environmental Assessment (EA) Document.** Copies of the EA are available for review at the Council City Hall and Council Public Library in Council, the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) District 3 and Headquarters offices in Boise, and the Federal Highway Administration offices in Boise.

**Request a CD-ROM of the EA and review.** Copies of the EA in an Adobe PDF are available by request via fax, email, regular mail, or downloaded from the internet at: [www.itd.idaho.gov](http://www.itd.idaho.gov) - click on *Get Involved; Southwest Idaho; U.S. 95 Council Alternate Route*

**Submit written comments:** (Written testimony, statements, or exhibits pertaining to the project will become part of the official hearing testimony if postmarked by July 6, 2006.)

- At the public hearing (see below)
- By fax to the attention of Gwen Smith, ITD Public Involvement Coordinator, at (208) 334-8561
- By mail to: Gwen Smith, Idaho Transportation Department, P.O. Box 7129, Boise, ID 83707-1129
- By email to: [comments@itd.idaho.gov](mailto:comments@itd.idaho.gov)

**Attend the public hearing.** ITD will conduct a public hearing to record written and oral testimony regarding the Environmental Assessment, and the design concept Alternative B, for the U.S. 95 Council Alternate Route. The hearing will be held **Thursday, June 22, from 4 to 7 p.m. at Council Elementary, 202 Highway 95 in Council, Idaho.** Project team members will be available to answer questions.

## What's Next?

Comments and suggestions collected at the hearing will be addressed in the Environmental Assessment document. After the document is approved by the Federal Highway Administration, the Idaho Transportation Department can proceed with final design and construction. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2010.

### TITLE VI OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT 1964

The Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) is committed to compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and all related regulations and directives. ITD assures that no person shall on the grounds of race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any ITD service, program, or activity. The department also assures that every effort will be made to prevent discrimination through the impacts of its programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations. In addition, the department will take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to services for persons with Limited English Proficiency.

Persons needing an interpreter or special accommodations are urged to contact Gwen Smith, Public Involvement Coordinator at (208) 334-4444 or TDD/TDY (208) 334-4458.

Se les recomienda a las personas que necesiten un intérprete o arreglos especiales que llamen a la coordinadora de participación pública, Gwen Smith, al (208) 334-4444 ó TDD/TDY (208) 334-4458.



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